

SOC251H1F -- Contemporary Sociological Theory

Fall 2019

University of Toronto

Class Time and Location: Mondays, 3:00-6:00, UC161

Professor: Dr. Katelin Albert

Office: Room 225E, Dept. of Sociology, 725 Spadina Avenue

Email: katelin.albert@mail.utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Mondays 12:15-2:15, or by appointment

Teaching Assistants: Gordon Brett - gordon.brett@utoronto.ca

Course Description: This course covers key topics and theorists in contemporary sociological theory. It provides an introduction to major contemporary social theorists, focusing on their sociology and theories in historical context. It will introduce you to key perspectives of Functionalism; Symbolic Interactionism, Ethnomethodology; Social Constructionism, Structuralism, Postmodernism, Postcolonial Theory, and Intersectionality. We will address key themes, such as the tensions between political/public engagement and scholarship, the micro-meso-macro level of analysis issue, and the question of excluded/marginalized/optimal marginal creative thinkers. While the span of contemporary theory is vast, and continues to grow, this course provides an in-depth snap shot of many of the main theorists and schools of thought.

Student Responsibilities and Expectations: This is a fast-paced and intensive course with a heavy reading. Students are expected to attend class, read assigned course material before class, and prepare for, lead, and participate in classroom discussions. You are expected to be respectful of fellow classmates in discussions and lectures, curious and open-minded about others' and one's own perspectives, and cultivate an environment for mutual growth through collaboration and dialogue.

Assignments:

Evaluation Format	Date	Weight
1. Writing Assignment #1	Oct 21, 9:00 am	10%
2. Writing Assignment #2	Dec 2, 9:00 am	15%
3. Midterm	Oct 28, in class	30%
4. Final Exam	TBA, exam schedule	30%
5. In-class questions	Ongoing	10%
6. Participation (In class workshops)	#1 – Sept 23 #2 - Oct 7 #3 - Oct 21 #4 – Nov 18 #5 – Dec 2	5% (1% each)

1-2. Writing assignments: These writing assignments will pose a question about the readings that require students to critically analyze the authors' ideas.

Your knowledge of course material will be gauged across the **following dimensions:**

- Your ability to identify theoretical concepts and processes, as well as who wrote what
- Your ability to define concepts and provide suitable examples
- Your ability to explain the relevance of particular concepts and processes to specific theoretical perspectives
- Your ability to *evaluate* theories *analytically* in terms of shared commonalities, points of

difference, and conceptual strengths and weaknesses.

Late papers will be penalized 10% percent for the first day they are late, then 5% everyday afterwards, including weekends and holidays. Papers more than one week late will not be marked. See late guidelines, below.

Writing Assignment #1: Interaction and social exchange

In this paper, you must **discuss and compare** how scholars in different traditions dealt with **interaction and social exchange**.

Use at least two theorists that we've covered so far. The goal is to discuss the concepts that the scholars used to explain interaction and social exchange.

See full assignment details on Quercus.

Writing Assignment # 2: Gender & Race

In this essay, you will ultimately be answering the following question: How does theorizing social categories like gender and race transform sociological theory?

i) Pick one scholar who discusses race and one who discusses gender. Provide an overview of each theorist's ideas, and then ii) make an argument for how their concepts could transform or add to the frameworks of ONE of the following theorists: Parsons, Merton, Goffman, Berger & Luckmann, or Foucault.

The goal is to use theories of race and gender to expand and challenge social theory. You should NOT simply point out that these scholars have overlooked race and gender; rather, you should make an argument for how these theories could be transformed through consideration of race and gender.

See full assignment details on Quercus.

3 & 4 Test and Exam: Both the test and final exam will likely be comprised of questions about key ideas and concepts, short answer questions, and a long answer question.

5. In-class questions: Throughout the semester, students will sporadically be asked a question in class, usually at the start of class, and based on the readings for that week. The timing of this will **not** be announced ahead of time. This question will be shown on PowerPoint and will be removed after 10 minutes. *If you are late to class or miss that class, you will not have a chance to submit an answer to this question.*

6. Participation/In Class Workshops: Throughout the term, we will have in class workshops -- some sessions will focus on particular aspects of successful academic writing, others on course content. You will get participation by attending class and participating in these workshops. *If you miss a workshop, you are not able to make these marks up outside of class.*

Required Texts: Readings are available through the University of Toronto library, online, and on Quercus.

IMPORTANT ITEMS

Email communication: In accordance with the University of Toronto's suggested practices – and due to email security issues – I will only respond to emails sent from a University of Toronto email account (i.e., mail.utoronto.ca, utsc.utoronto.ca, etc.)

At times you may have to wait a minimum of 48 hours (2 days) for a reply to an email inquiry. Please do not send multiple emails within a 48 hour period. I do not respond to email during the weekend. So, if you send an email on a Thursday or a Friday you will likely have to wait until Monday for a response.

- All emails should include the course name and code (e.g., CONTEMPORARY - SOC251) in the subject line.
- Assignments will not be accepted via email.
- All emails should be signed with the student's full name and student number.
- Treat emails as you would any other professional communication.
- Emails that ask questions that are answered in the course syllabus or website will not receive a response.
- Emails that do not follow these guidelines will not receive a response.

Make Up Tests: Upon receipt of valid documentation, a make up test/exam will be held for those students who were unable to write a test. All documentation (see valid documentation below) must be submitted within one week of the missed test, unless this is impossible.

Late Assignments: To request accommodation for a missed assignment **you must present your case to the Professor, Katelin Albert, via email: Katelin.albert@mail.utoronto.ca**

- You are expected to complete assignments on time.
- An assignment is considered late if it is not submitted by the due date and time on the syllabus. After this time, late penalties apply. You are expected to keep a back-up copy of your assignment in case it is lost.
- If your assignment is late, please follow the same submission procedures. Your electronic submission will be time-stamped, and late penalties will be applied accordingly. The electronic copy must be identical to any hard copy submitted.
- Late assignments for reasons that are *within your control* will be penalized 10% per day (i.e.: 24 hours) beginning one minute after the due date time (e.g., 11:01 am) on the assignment due date and 5% for every 24 hour period thereafter. The penalty will run from the date and time the assignment was due until the date and time it is submitted electronically. The penalty period includes weekends and holidays.
- For lateness *beyond your control*, the documentation must indicate that you were unable to engage in school work on the due date of the assignment for a ONE day extension. For a longer extension you must prove that you were unable to engage in school work for a longer period or provide documentation that you encountered an exceptional, unforeseen circumstance. The documentation should be presented to the INSTRUCTOR.
- Assignments more than 7 days late will not be accepted unless they are accompanied by valid documentation of circumstances beyond the student's control.

Documentation: Students who miss a test or assignment due date, due to medical illness must provide a written medical excuse within one or two days after the missed deadline. In case of an illness, you must supply a **Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at**

www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor's note is also acceptable but **MUST** contain the start date and anticipated end date of the illness. The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor and submitted in class or during the instructor or TA's office hours.

If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from taking a test when it is scheduled, you must get a letter from your college registrar. The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor and submitted in class or during the instructor or TA's office hours.

Dates for make-up tests will be announced in class and posted on QUERCUS. The date for the make-up for the last test will be posted on QUERCUS.

Re-Grading Policy: For clarification and questions about your grades, students should wait at least 24 hours after receiving their grade to contact the TA or instructor. This is intended to encourage adequate time for reflection on the grade and its rationale. If you wish to request a regrade of an assignment, you must submit a formal one-page letter by email within 5 days of receiving your grade. Indicate specifically your areas of concern, your questions, and make an argument as to why your grade should be different.

NOTE: Regrades can result in a higher or lower grade.

Attendance: Students are required to attend all classes. Information conveyed in the lectures will appear on the course tests.

Classroom etiquette: Students are expected to arrive at class on time. Students are welcome to use a laptop in class, although hand-writing notes is encouraged. If you are using a laptop, it is vital that you do not distract your classmates. I ask that you only use your laptop for note taking. If I catch you using your laptop for reasons other than note-taking (and this is easy to spot...), you will receive a warning. If you are caught a second time, you will be asked to close your laptop for the remainder of the class. If you are caught a third time, you will lose the privilege of using a laptop in class.

***** Videotaping and recording lectures is not allowed.**

Quercus: I will be using Quercus to post course materials and documents, and to make general class announcements. Please make sure that you have access to the course page.

Turnitin.com: Assignments submit to Quercus will automatically be submit to Turnitin. There is no additional submission required.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to **Turnitin.com** for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the **Turnitin.com** reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the **Turnitin.com** service are described on the **Turnitin.com** web site.

Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will receive a grade of zero (0 %) **unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper**, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Conditions of Use

"Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site".

Click here for information surrounding the issues of [Canadian copyright and privacy laws](#).

Student Services and Resources:

Accessibility: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel welcome to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060 or accessibility.utoronto.ca

Equity & Diversity: The University of Toronto and I are committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

In particular, you may wish to acquaint yourself with the Sexual & Gender Diversity Office at <https://sgdo.utoronto.ca/about-the-office/equity-diversity-u-of-t/> and the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office at <http://antiracism.utoronto.ca/>. Further resources for First Nations students, students of faith, and more can be found at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca/>.

Plagiarism & Cheating: Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments: Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor. Making up sources or facts. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams: Using or possessing unauthorized aids. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test. Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work: Falsifying institutional documents or grades. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional

information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>).

Grading and Marks: Grades will reflect the standard outlined by the University of Toronto.

Percentage	Grade	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	Outstanding
85-89	A	Exceptional
80-84	A-	
77-79	B+	Good
73-76	B	
70-72	B-	
67-69	C+	Adequate
63-66	C	
60-62	C-	
57-59	D+	Marginal
53-56	D	
50-52	D-	
0-49	F	Inadequate

- A Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
- B Good performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
- C Intellectually adequate performance: student who is profiting from her or his university experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
- D Minimally acceptable performance: some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
- F Inadequate performance: little evidence of even superficial understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature

Class Schedule:

Please be aware that topics and readings are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

1. Monday Sept 9: Introduction

- 1) Course Overview and Introductions
 - 2) Suggestions for reading difficult material
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2. Monday Sept 16: Functionalism

Reading 1: Ritzer, George. 2008. "Introduction to Structural Functionalism." Pp. 97-127 in *Modern Sociological Theory, Seventh Edition*.

Reading 2: Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." *American Sociological Review* 3(5): pp. 672-682

* Readings available on Quercus

3. Monday Sept 23: Symbolic Interactionism

Reading 1: Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Pp. 1-46.

* Readings available on Quercus

IN-CLASS WRITING WORKSHOP #1: Strategies for Pre-Writing

4. Monday Sept 30: Ethnomethodology

Reading 1: Garfinkel, Harold. 1967/1991. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Selections: Chapter 2 (35-75).

* Readings available on Quercus

5. Monday Oct 7: Social Constructionism

Reading 1: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Pp. 13-61

* Reading available at: Quercus

IN-CLASS WRITING WORKSHOP #2: How to write an introduction

6. Monday Oct 14: No Class, Thanksgiving

7. Monday Oct 21 – Foucault

Reading 1: Ritzer, George. 2008. "The Ideas of Michel Foucault." Pp. 480-490 in *Modern Sociological Theory*, Seventh Edition.

Reading 2: Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. "Panopticism" (195- 228).

* Reading available at: Quercus

PAPER #1 DUE OCT 21, before class at 9 am

IN- IN-CLASS WRITING WORKSHOP #3: Midterm Review

8. Monday Oct 28: MIDTERM TEST, IN CLASS

9. Monday Nov 4: Reading Week, no class

10. Monday Nov 11: Bourdieu

Reading 1: Bourdieu, Pierre. [1977] 1999. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Chapter 4: "Structures, Habitus and Power:" pp. 159-197

* Readings available on Quercus

11. Monday Nov 18: Standpoint Theory

Reading 2: Dorothy Smith. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic*. Selections Introduction: pp. 1-13 o Chapter 2: pp. 49-104

* Readings available on Quercus

IN-CLASS WRITING WORKSHOP #4: Making Points, Constructing Paragraphs

12. Monday Nov 25: Women of Colour and Queer Critique

Reading 1: Patricia Hill Collins. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought*. Chapter 1: "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought:" pp. 3-18

Reading 2: Stein, Arlene and Ken Plummer. 1994. "I Can't Even Think Straight: 'Queer' Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 12(2): pp. 178-187.

* Readings available on Quercus

13. Dec 2: Post Colonial Theory

Reading 1: Edward Said. 1978. "Introduction." Pp. 1-28 in *Orientalism*.

Reading 2: Chandra Talpade Mohanty. 1991. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." Pp. 51-80 in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*.

IN-CLASS WRITING WORKSHOP #5: Final Exam Review

Paper Due #2 DUE DEC 2, before class at 9 am.